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Local businessman Turner Woodward wins ARTI award

The Arts Council of Indianapolis gave local entrepreneur Turner Woodard an ARTI Award at the annual Start with Art luncheon today.

Woodard was nominated by the Stutz Artists Association, a group of 80 artists who rent studios in the historic Stutz building, which Woodard bought and renovated in 1992.

“Turner is a civic leader who is not often heralded, but what he did 15 years ago took vision and determination,” said Jerry Points, president of the Stutz Artists Association. “Without Turner’s leadership, the Stutz Artists Association – the largest association of working artists in Indiana – wouldn’t exist today, and the 80 artists who work at the Stutz wouldn’t be here.”

Fifteen years ago, Woodard was serving on the board of Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana and a successful real estate developer. Landmarks invited him to walk through a huge old building that was slated for demolition. The long-vacant building took up an entire city block and was once a factory where the Stutz Motor Car Company manufactured the famous Torpedo Roadster and Bearcat. The cavernous structure featured freight elevators big enough to hold cars and indoor alleys that would be ideal for loading and unloading large canvases and supplies.

When he discovered the building and its automotive heritage, Woodard, whose passions include history, art and cars, saw a vision for the future and couldn’t bear to see it torn down. So, he bought the Stutz Building and renovated the old factory with dreams of renting studios to artists.

He tells of friends who, at the time, thought he was a bit crazy. “You think artists are really going to pay rent?” they asked.

Fast forward to today. Woodard’s building is home to more than 80 artists, sculptors, photographers, designers, architects and craftsmen. The building is an enclave of creativity.

“Turner’s leadership – especially when the notion of supporting individual artists wasn’t a popular thing to do – is a big reason our city’s visual arts community is thriving today,” said Points.

In addition to providing the space and opportunity for artists to work alongside each other, Woodard is supportive of the association’s monthly First Fridays and its annual open house, which takes place every April. He provides a significant amount of in-kind support and manpower to assure that the event, which attracts more than 6,000 people every year, is a success. Plus, he exhibits his own abstract paintings, which he’s been doing since his seventh grade teacher stoked his talent.

Woodard’s latest philanthropic endeavor involves **STUTZARTSPACE**, a non-profit visual art center created by Stutz Artists Association leadership to provide space for workshops and gallery exhibitions and to better connect artists, audiences and resources. Woodard’s family foundation is providing financial support for **STUTZARTSPACE, which will open for classes and workshops in January, 2008.**